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**NAVAL
POSTGRADUATE
SCHOOL**

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

CHINESE MOVEMENTS AND SOCIAL CONTROLS

by

Michelle S. Mui

June 2006

Thesis Advisor: Anna Simons
Second Reader: Christopher Twomey

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CHINESE MOVEMENTS AND SOCIAL CONTROLS

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Lieutenant, United States Navy
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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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The purpose of this thesis is to explore and analyze the threat posed by certain social movements during the post-Mao reform era and the various methods of social control used by the Chinese government to deal with them. The thesis will use historical data and three case studies to examine the influence and popularity of social movements and methods of control, from surveillance to physical intimidation to imprisonment and forced exile. The thesis will also explore the evolution of social control over the decades of social change in China. What characteristics of a social movement threaten the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)? Does the CCP have a preferred method of social control, and has that method withstood the test of time? Does the increasing number of protests signify that China is losing control over its population? What does the future hold?

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE

The early Chinese Communist Party (CCP) maintained effective control over its population. But in recent years, this control seems to have waned as protests and demonstrations continue to grow in size and occurrence. Public protests, once rare in Communist China, are becoming anything but, numbering in the tens of thousands each year. And the growing numbers of protests are also growing in size and organization. The statistics are staggering, with police claiming a nationwide increase of 268 percent from 1993 to 1999 and a similar trend in 2000 and 2001.¹

Surprisingly, the central government's responses have been relatively mild, engaging in limited dialogue and compromise with individuals or isolated groups or leaving local authorities to deal with the issues. However, several exceptions do stand out, when the central government not only took action, but elicited widespread criticism from the international community for cracking down so harshly on the offending parties. Three movements which evoked a central government response are the Tiananmen Square Massacre of 1989, the China Democracy Movement of 1998, and the quasi-religious sect of Falun Gong.

Since the death of Mao Zedong and the debacle of the Cultural Revolution, the pro-reform element within the central government has slowly gained more influence, and

¹ Murray Scot Tanner, "China Rethinks Unrest," *The Washington Quarterly*, 27.3 (2004): 137-138; available from http://muse.jhu.edu.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/journals/washington_quarterly/v027/27.3tanner.html; accessed 7 February 2006.

has sought to change Chinese society through economic and political reforms. But when the government is itself directly threatened, it tends to revert to the more traditional methods of social control characteristic of Mao and police states.

The purpose of this thesis is two-fold. The first objective is to examine instances when the Chinese government has reverted to traditionally aggressive methods of social control to pacify certain elements of the population, and to determine why those instances warranted such action. Did the three case studies mentioned above pose a particular threat to the CCP, and if so why? What was it about these movements that attracted the government's attention? The second objective of this thesis is to examine the actual methods of social control exercised by the CCP. What have been the methods of choice, have those methods of social control changed or evolved over time, and how effective have they been against dissident elements of society? Effectiveness should be characterized by how quickly and decisively the government reacted to each movement and if these movements retained any influence after the crackdowns.

B. BACKGROUND

When Mao Zedong assumed power and established the People's Republic of China in 1949, the government exercised authoritarian rule over its population. During the first several decades, with the Kuomintang Nationalists safely ensconced in Taiwan, the Communist Party suffered little resistance from its citizens. Even Chairman Mao Zedong's Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution did not elicit much resistance despite large death tolls and

widespread famine. How was the Party able to maintain such tight control? What elements of control did it exert?

The Chinese Communist Party assumed complete control of all media in the country and used media to promote Mao and the Party while the Nationalists, Japan, and Taiwan were vilified. In the late 1950s Mao allowed citizens to express their opinions about how the government should be run, but he quickly reconsidered his decision when the liberal and intellectual thinkers of China began voicing opposition to and criticism of the CCP, leading to the persecution of approximately 500,000 citizens.

The early communist government relied heavily on propaganda and physical persuasion to exert control over the populace. Secret police and surveillance kept the citizenry in line, as did the numerous detentions, purges, and forced confessions of intellectuals and political challengers to Mao and Party policy. Collectivization of land for redistribution to peasants also helped to retain the support of the majority. But as China began to grow economically, the government could no longer shelter the population from external ideas or influence. Following the travesty of the Cultural Revolution, Mao fell from power. More moderate views took hold and a period of reformation began.

The 1970's ushered in a new era, or at least a new regime, with Deng Xiaoping's rise to power. In 1978 Deng led a series of economic and political reforms which gradually implemented a market economy and some political liberalization that relaxed the system set up by Mao. It was during Deng's administration that the first real organized protests began to take place.

The Beijing Spring of 1977 and 1978 marked a brief period of political liberalization, during which the public had unusual freedom to criticize the government. This is also when the Chinese democracy movement sprang forth. Although Wei Jingsheng, the author of the movement's founding document, the Fifth Modernization, was imprisoned for fifteen years, his ideas continued to gain in popularity and spread among the college educated citizens concerned about growing corruption and economic dislocation. By the 1980's the Chinese people were starting to visibly chafe under the Communist regime. The intellectuals were dissatisfied with the level of social and political reforms, while inflation and unemployment threatened the workers. The urban population began questioning the government, protesting against corruption and calling for more social and political reform.

Although student demonstrations took place in 1985 and 1986, it wasn't until June 4, 1989, that these demonstrations captured international attention. Students and workers, highly influenced by the democratic movement, marched in Beijing. They occupied Tiananmen Square and began a hunger strike to protest China's economic instability and political corruption. But what began as peaceful student demonstrations, ended in bloodshed. After the declaration of martial law failed to resolve the conflict, the government ordered the use of military force, which effectively quashed the protest, but sparked the overseas formation of numerous pro-democracy organizations by Chinese student activists.

Following Tiananmen, the China Democracy Party (CDP) attempted to gain official recognition as an opposition

party to the CCP in 1998. Seemingly tolerated at first, the CDP soon found itself the target of a severe crackdown. It did not survive long. The democratic movement began its decline in the 1990s due to repressive measures by the Chinese government, including strict controls over the media and internet in mentioning democracy. Additionally the September 11 attacks on the United States allowed China to pass a number of anti-terrorist measures, which further expanded its authority to prosecute suspected potential dissent.

Most recently the quasi-religious sect of Falun Gong gained popularity among a large portion of the population who turned to it for spiritual guidance and health benefits. Once an officially recognized organization, it was outlawed after followers staged a peaceful demonstration to protest increasing government restrictions over its activities.

C. METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this thesis is a case study approach based on library research and analysis. The case study chapters will all be structured similarly to provide a uniform method of description and analysis.

The first case study will present an historical overview of Tiananmen Square, including some background and a description of the events leading up to the bloodshed of June 4, 1989. The discussions of the repercussions of the crackdown will be followed by an analysis of the government's actions and methods of control used during the crisis.

The second case study will examine the China Democracy Movement. Though small in size and influence, the central

government still chose to take definitive action against the CDM. This chapter will provide background on the movement's origin and members, followed by a description of the events leading up to the government's response to the Movement's quest for recognition, and the consequences to both sides. The analysis portion will concentrate on the government's actions and their effectiveness.

The third case study will focus on the quasi-religious sect of Falun Gong, a practice once recognized and followed by millions before being vilified almost overnight. Background will be offered on the origin of qi gong and why Falun Gong was so popular. Description of the government's change in perception and its actions will be followed by an account and analysis of the social control methods used.

The concluding chapter will pull together the analyses from the preceding three case studies in order to compare and contrast their similarities and differences and determine why these movements posed such a threat to the Party. It will examine the methods of control used against each movement to determine their effectiveness and whether the Chinese government changed, evolved, or modified its methods over time.

II. TIANANMEN SQUARE CASE STUDY

A. INTRODUCTION

The 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstration was arguably the most significant demonstration in the history of Communist rule in the People's Republic of China (PRC). What began as a commemoration for a fallen leader and a call for social change and political reform quickly escalated through peaceful demonstration and hunger strikes to martial law, violence, and death. Tiananmen was significant not only because of its size and scope, but also thanks to media coverage and its resulting effects on the Chinese government. Hundreds of thousands of students, workers, and local residents participated in the demonstrations, symbolizing a significant campaign against authority. What events inspired such widespread support, why did the government react the way it did, and why did the demonstration fail?

B. BACKGROUND

Tiananmen Square is culturally significant for its location and as a historical landmark. It is a large plaza near the center of Beijing, measuring some 90 acres, making it the largest open-urban square in the world. In it stands the massive monument to China's revolutionary martyrs along with Mao Zedong's mausoleum.

Initially, Tiananmen Square was a symbolic, ritualistic, and bureaucratic space, but as the surrounding areas became China's political and educational center, the square slowly came to be a natural forum for rallies and political debates. The Department of Justice and Parliament were located on the west side while numerous

colleges and universities were clustered around the square, including the three main campus units of Beijing University, women's colleges, and the prestigious Qinghua College where students developed their English-language skills before commencing study in the United States.²

The first major demonstration in Tiananmen Square occurred in 1917 when students and townspeople gathered in the square to celebrate the failed attempt to restore Emperor Puyi to power. On May 4, 1919, three thousand student representatives from thirteen area universities and colleges protested the Treaty of Versailles, which granted several German concessions in China to Japan. The protests of the May Fourth Movement ushered in a new phase of nationalism and firmly established Tiananmen Square as a political focal point. It became a site for massive demonstrations in 1925 when 100,000 gathered in a sympathy rally for forty plus Chinese demonstrators killed by British police. On October 1, 1949, Mao used the site to declare the founding of the People's Republic of China, establishing it as the Communist government's preeminent public space. Although the government tried to maintain control of the square by relocating most of the colleges and universities, the public still demonstrated its access to the area with the spontaneous mourning assembly for Premier Zhou Enlai in 1976 and the Democracy Wall Movement of 1978-1979.³

In 1978 Deng Xiaoping, the new leader of Communist China, included a series of economic and reforms which gradually yielded a market economy, as well as some

² Jonathan D. Spence, *Chinese Roundabout* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992), 298.

³ *Ibid.*, 298-303.

political liberalization that relaxed the system set up by Mao.⁴ While the economic reforms mainly benefited the rural population, they left most of the country's intellectuals and urban industrial workers dissatisfied. By the 1980's this latter faction of the Chinese population began to chafe under the Communist regime. The intellectuals were dissatisfied with the level of social and political reforms, while inflation and unemployment threatened the workers. Even the urban population began questioning the government and started to protest against corruption. Despite the Chinese government's implementation of a number of economic reforms which helped the farmers and peasants, its continued reluctance toward greater social and political reform distressed millions.

Early student demonstrations took place in Tiananmen in December 1986. Although the students disbanded peacefully the following month, then-Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang was criticized for his weak leadership in combating ideological deterioration and was forced to resign from his post. However, students continued to regard him as a symbol of liberal reform and clean government.⁵

Throughout the late 1980s, the population continued to protest China's economic instability and political corruption. In 1988 Deng implemented a number of

⁴ This sentence and following paragraph draws on Jeffrey T. Richelson and Michael L. Evans, "Tiananmen Square, 1989 The Declassified History," *National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 16*, 1 June 1999; available from <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB16/>; accessed 1 December 2005.

⁵ Zhang Liang, *The Tiananmen Papers: The Chinese Leadership's Decision to Use Force Against Their Own People - In Their Own Words* (Public Affairs: New York, 2001), 19.

deflationary measures, which created hardships among the urban residents and rural migrants. Additionally, the population had grown increasingly weary of government corruption.

This period was also characterized by conflicting sentiments among party leaders who were divided on the issue of economic reform. Zhao Ziyang, then-Chinese Communist Party (CCP) General Secretary and Deng Xiaoping's appointed successor, represented the "reformers" whereas Premier Li Peng represented the "conservatives."⁶ Zhao Ziyang led the moderate faction in the Party and was more sympathetic to the students' cause. He would later advocate talks with the students while Li was to consider the students a threat to the Chinese government and advocated quick and decisive actions to suppress them.

The decline of Communism in Eastern Europe in 1989 further complicated matters. The Chinese leadership watched nervously as communist regimes toppled, later culminating in the bloody end of Ceausescu's reign. Chinese leaders panicked at this development, particularly when faced with the rise of civil protests within their own borders.

As the events in Tiananmen began to evolve, the pro-reform liberals slowly lost ground to the conservatives in choosing a method of response. Other events such as Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's visit to Beijing and the seventieth anniversary of the May Fourth Movement further aggravated an already precarious situation.

⁶ Alan P. Liu, "Aspects of Beijing's Crisis Management: The Tiananmen Square Demonstration," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 30, No. 5. (May 1990), 507.

C. EVENTS

On April 15, 1989, the death of Hu Yaobang, the popular former general secretary, provided students with an opportunity to voice their dissatisfaction with the pace of political change. They launched spontaneous mourning activities that spread rapidly and alarmed conservative Party leaders that pro-democratic elements would attempt to play on students' emotions to their own benefit.⁷

The student movement initially began with a desire to commemorate Hu, praising his contributions to the Party and voicing the need for political reform and opposition to corruption. However, small minorities among the demonstrators seized the opportunity to criticize the Party and certain leaders, demand freedom of press and speech, and call for democratic elections and greater government transparency. Slogans that were previously limited to school campuses found their way to Tiananmen Square.⁸

Government leaders were divided in their assessment of the movement's threat. While Party General Secretary Zhao Ziyang recommended patience and open dialogue with the students, Premier Li Peng towed the conservative line and regarded the demonstrations as a potential threat to Party stability.⁹ After government officials refused to receive student petitioners at the Great Hall of the People on April 18, several students staged a sit-in in front of Zhongnanhai's Xinhua Gate.¹⁰ On the evening of April 19, student demonstrators attempted to break through police

⁷ Zhang, 27.

⁸ Ibid., 19.

⁹ Ibid., 26-27.

¹⁰ Zhongnanhai complex serves as the Party's central government headquarters, and Xinhua Gate is the southern entrance to the compound.

lines. The following morning, the Beijing government declared temporary martial law in order to bus the students back to their campuses. More than one hundred students refused to cooperate and clashed with police.¹¹ A number of autonomous student organizations formed virtually overnight on April 20-21, further hardening the views of the conservative Party leaders.¹²

The movement, while concentrated in Beijing, was by no means limited to Beijing. Other major cities also reported demonstrations, but with a broader social base of participants and more radical slogans.¹³ Initially the demonstrators in Beijing consisted mostly of university students and some intellectuals. Other Beijing citizens were slower to join in the demonstrations. Demonstrations in the outlying provinces were quicker to unite and involve other social groups. While the masses in Beijing applauded the students, the crowds in outlying provinces marched with the students. Thus, these demonstrations consisted of students, workers, officials, and residents whose concerns were not limited to Hu's death. The issues they were protesting also included inflation, salaries, and housing problems.¹⁴

Believing that the demonstrations would dissipate following Hu's memorial service, Zhao Ziyang continued to advocate patience. He did not believe that the demonstrators were challenging the ultimate leadership of the Communist Party, but instead calling for dialogue and

¹¹ Zhang, 30-31.

¹² Ibid., xxxv, 19, 31-38, 45-48.

¹³ Ibid., 44-45.

¹⁴ Ibid., 44.

for the Party itself to address and solve the problems they raised. Prior to departing for his scheduled visit to North Korea¹⁵, Zhao left Li Peng in charge with three basic instructions: firmly prevent the students from returning to the streets and demonstrating after the funeral, avoid bloodshed at all costs while legally prosecuting vandals, and exercise a policy of persuasion through dialogue.¹⁶ However as a precaution, Central Military Commission (CMC) Chairman Deng Xiaoping dispatched approximately nine thousand soldiers to reinforce the police in maintaining order in the capital and to escort Hu Yaobang's hearse to the cemetery.¹⁷

When the students did not disperse as expected, but instead continued their boycott of classes, Li told Deng Xiaoping that the students wanted to overthrow the government. He believed hostile elements were manipulating the situation and feared they would soon network with the workers and farmers to gain their support.¹⁸ Alarmed by this assessment, Deng labeled the movement "turmoil" and decisively denounced it. His remarks were published in an April 26 editorial of the *People's Daily*.¹⁹

The harsh editorial further invigorated the movement, which now gained support from citizens and not just students, who felt the editorial was an exaggeration and an

¹⁵ The *Tiananmen Papers* cite a conversation between Zhao Ziyang and Tian Jiyun, one of Zhao's most trusted friends and lieutenants, which implies that the state visit had been previously scheduled and that Zhao made a conscious decision not to postpone it. However, it is more commonly believed that the visit was actually scheduled at the last minute in order to get Zhang out of the country.

¹⁶ Zhang, 50.

¹⁷ Ibid., 47.

¹⁸ Ibid., 46, 48, 56.

¹⁹ Ibid., xxxvi.

overreaction. The students saw themselves as patriots and protested in an effort to have the assessment rescinded. Government leaders first tried to win back public support through public statements and organizational work via administrators, professors, and officials; however, government support among these individuals began wavering as well. On April 26, the Party organized mass demonstrations in which over ten thousand cadre were to infiltrate the student protesters and counter any inciting words or actions. Regular troops were also stationed in the streets around the Square to further signify the government's resolve.²⁰

The April 27 student demonstrations that broke out in response to the editorial were the largest in Beijing since the protests began. Even cities without previous demonstrations reported them. In response, Deng Xiaoping authorized the deployment of five hundred troops into Beijing to protect the Great Hall of the People and to serve as a reserve force if needed.²¹

Although reporters interviewed students throughout the movement, government censorship of state-controlled media kept most stories out of Chinese newspapers. As a result, students stopped talking to Chinese reporters and turned instead to foreign journalists.

Unable to suppress the demonstrations and quell the reaction to the April 26 editorial, Li Peng assigned Yuan Mu, State Council spokesman, to conduct a dialogue with the students. In this discussion Yuan promoted the Party line, denied problems of corruption and censorship, cautioned the

²⁰ Liu, 513.

²¹ Zhang, 81.

Beijing demonstrators against being manipulated by counterrevolutionary elements, and evaded student questions. His performance was not well received, and students took to the streets and campuses again in protest.²²

When Zhao Ziyang returned from his trip to North Korea on April 30, he faced a much-deteriorated situation compared to when he left. He clashed with Li Peng over their assessment of the situation and the actions taken. Zhao believed that revising the April 26 editorial and addressing the students' legitimate concerns would ameliorate the situation. Li argued that Deng's words could not be recalled and that order must be restored before further reforms could be considered.²³

However, all Party leaders wanted control reestablished by May 4 in order to avoid further turmoil during the seventieth anniversary of the May Fourth Movement. Intellectuals expected the anniversary to provide an opportunity for advocates to promote political reform and democratization.²⁴ Beijing was also scheduled to host an internationally significant meeting of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on that day. On May 2 Peking University students presented a petition listing twelve demands for a series of dialogues. In response Yuan Mu held a press conference on May 3 rejecting the students' twelve demands, further inciting the students who, in turn,

²² Zhang, 95-96.

²³ Ibid., 100, 117-118.

²⁴ The May Fourth Movement originated in 1919 and is viewed as the high point of Chinese liberalism and the start of the Chinese Communist Revolution.

voted to continue demonstrations on May 4.²⁵ Tens of thousands of students from fifty-one campuses marched on the Square with drums, banners, and slogans, issuing a "May Fourth Declaration." The declaration called for the government to accelerate political and economic reform, guarantee constitutional freedom, fight corruption, adopt a press law, and allow privately run newspapers.²⁶ A number of Beijing journalists also joined the students. Prompted by recent censorship and the closing of the *World Economic Herald* in Shanghai, some two hundred reporters and editors joined the demonstrators and circulated a petition demanding dialogue with central leaders to discuss freedom of the press.²⁷

After the second week of demonstrations, the students grew frustrated with the lack of government action in response to their demands, and began a hunger strike on May 13 that garnered international attention and worldwide sympathy. The announcement of the hunger strike and Gorbachev's imminent visit scheduled for May 15 worried and incensed Party leaders. The hunger strike reinvigorated protests, attracting larger numbers from broader social groups, garnering nearly unanimous support among students, workers, farmers, staff members of government ministries and banks, and even some military officers and police cadets.²⁸

After the diplomatic humiliation of Gorbachev's visit, the Politburo Standing Committee, consisting of Li Peng, Hu

²⁵ Zhang, 109.

²⁶ Ibid., 113.

²⁷ Ibid., 112, 114.

²⁸ Ibid., 175.

Qili, Qiao Shi, Yao Yilin, and Zhao Ziyang, met at Deng Xiaoping's home to discuss its next course of action. Zhao still favored accepting the students' demand to change the verdict of the April 26 editorial and label the demonstrations as patriotic not turmoil, but he was unable to convince Deng. The conservatives felt that any further concessions to the students would doom the Party and lead to anarchy. Deng opposed Zhao and directed the Standing Committee to declare martial law in the capital on May 16 despite Zhao's objections.

Unable to rescind Deng's April 26 editorial statement about the student demonstration or forestall the declaration of martial law, Zhao accepted his defeat and attempted to resign in protest but was rebuffed. Because Zhao had also attempted to convince the students in the Square to end their hunger strike and demonstrations to no avail,²⁹ the Party used him as a scapegoat, blaming his soft approach and moderate responses for allowing the situation to escalate out of control. Li accused him of individualism, undermining Party unity, and supporting the demonstrators. Exhausted and discouraged, Zhao withdrew from the decision-making process until he was officially replaced by Jiang Zemin, whose hard-line tactics and earlier purge of the *World Economic Herald* in Shanghai caught the attention of Party members seeking to promote stricter conservative measures. Zhao was stripped of all party posts and placed under virtual house arrest. His staff and supporters met with similar ends.

²⁹ Michael S. Chase, "Communists Behaving Badly," *SAIS Review* 21.2 Johns Hopkins University Press (2001): 228.

Troops from twenty-two divisions attempted to move into Beijing on May 20, but were initially turned back by residents who were sympathetic to the students and had blocked the streets. Opposition to martial law was widespread. First day reactions from provincial polls showed over 80 percent of the population disapproved.³⁰ There was even an incident of an army commander refusing to carry out his orders.³¹ Additionally, thousands of overseas Chinese throughout North America and Europe rallied to support the student demonstrators and denounce the government's decision to implement martial law.³²

On June 2, the remaining members of the Standing Committee finalized their decision to clear the Square by force and ordered troops to begin moving toward the city center. As plain clothed and uniformed soldiers entered the city, they were met with anger and violence. Demonstrators and supporters set up blockades, surrounded pockets of soldiers, and threw rocks, bricks, and Molotov cocktails. The central government labeled these actions as "counterrevolutionary rebellion" and ordered the Square cleared. During the crackdown, several fights broke out, resulting in casualties among both soldiers and civilians. The Chinese Red Cross reported a final death toll of approximately 2,600.³³

D. AFTERWARDS

Following the government's actions at Tiananmen, the various organizations quickly dissolved as the Party began

³⁰ Zhang, 234.

³¹ Ibid., 239.

³² Ibid., 252, 266.

³³ Todd Crowell, "The Many Truths of Tiananmen," *Asia Times Online*, 8 June 2004; available from <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/FF08Ad07.html>; accessed 1 June 2006.

a purge of liberals from its ranks, targeting specific areas and organizations supportive of the demonstrations, and some 4 million party members for investigation. The goal was to ferret out any hostile, anti-party, and corrupt elements or those with liberal tendencies. Party members were required to reapply for membership after proving their support of the government's actions or risk expulsion from the Party.³⁴ Those who could escape found refuge in foreign lands while many who were left behind denied any involvement in the demonstrations. Many were arrested and forced to sign confessions. The martial law troops, the People's Armed Police, and the Municipal Public Security Bureau arrested 468 "counterrevolutionary rioters" by June 10, seven of whom were sentenced to death. By June 20, the number arrested rose to 831 and again to 1103 by June 30.³⁵ Some (mostly those safe overseas) continued the fight while others accepted the government's victory and, given its decisive defeat over the protesters, viewed it as legitimate again. Members of the press who had been involved in the demonstrations, had aided in the "extra" unauthorized newspaper publication, or had even appeared critical of the Party's actions were fired or investigated.

Few party leaders were willing to acknowledge publicly that frustration with rampant official corruption and the desire for greater popular participation in politics were among the root causes of the protests. Instead, they claimed that a cabal of domestic and foreign plotters bent on destabilizing China and overthrowing the CCP was

³⁴ James A. R. Miles, *The Legacy of Tiananmen: China In Disarray* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 27-28.

³⁵ Zhang, 447.

manipulating the students.³⁶ Even to this day, the Communist Party maintains that the demonstrations were a "counterrevolutionary rebellion" which was properly handled.³⁷

The events of Tiananmen Square unfolded under the watchful eyes of the worldwide press. Following these events, the PRC fell came under significant international criticism as a result of its actions. Numerous overseas Chinese marched on embassies to protest the bloodshed, while foreign government leaders similarly expressed their shock and outrage. The harsh suppression of the protesters caused widespread condemnation by the United States and other Western powers and led to U.S. sanctions, suspension of high-level contacts, and a halt in the transfer of military technology.³⁸ Other nations followed suit in instituting sanctions, suspending financial aid, and canceling travel to China.

Yet despite huge costs, China's leaders labeled the pro-democracy movement a counterrevolutionary rebellion and continue to firmly defend their decision to implement martial law, claiming that their harsh actions forestalled chaos and civil war.

E. ANALYSIS

The pro-democracy movement in the spring of 1989 vented deep social dissatisfactions as economic and industrial reforms led to inflation and corruption. As a result, the population began questioning China's leaders, political system, and direction. Government leaders were

³⁶ Chase, 226.

³⁷ Ibid., 230.

³⁸ Richelson.

divided about how to react, and whether to favor political liberalization or ideological tightening. Those who opposed political liberalization feared that weakening Party control would encourage ideological and social disorder.

Even before the demonstrations, the Chinese Communist Party leaders were split in their politics and views about economic reform. Subsequent student protests, the May 4 anniversary, Gorbachev's visit, and international news coverage created further fracturing. Tiananmen Square exposed this rift in the Party between conservatives, who viewed the demonstrations as turmoil, and reformers, who believed the demonstrations were essentially patriotic and in line with their own vision of gradual political reform. One side saw the need to maintain "stability" while the other side saw the folly in crushing the "banner of democracy."³⁹ In the end, the hard-liners won out, with Li's view of the actions as a "naked declaration of war against the Party" and his assessment of the pro-democracy movement as a "well-planned plot" to undermine party authority.⁴⁰

Conservative government elements viewed the demonstrations as an organized counterrevolutionary rebellion with wide-reaching support from students, intellectuals, workers, and farmers. Indeed, groups of liberal intellectuals did come out in support of the students' goals, and the students themselves came from a number of provinces throughout China, but with this diversity the movement lacked central organization.

³⁹ Chase, 228.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 227.

Reports from some cities also indicated linkups between students and workers.⁴¹ These ties, along with the apparent fervor of the demonstrators, greatly concerned Party leaders.

The Communist government has been responsible for many tragic events in the country's history: from the violence of land reform to the 30 million deaths of the Great Leap Forward to the purges of the Cultural Revolution. However, each time the government shifted the blame to others, whether to evil landlords, the weather, capitalists, counterrevolutionary revisionists, or even ghosts and spirits. In contrast, Tiananmen could not be blamed on the "enemies of the people" because it was a movement **of** the people. For the first time, the Party could not easily shift the blame and responsibility for the resulting violence and bloodshed.⁴² But this did not stop it from trying.

The events in Tiananmen concerned Party leaders because of its threat to Party rule. Tiananmen Square's location in the Chinese capital of Beijing and its history as the central place for protests made it impossible to ignore. Additionally the protestors attracted much support, both internationally and domestically, from a broad social base. Nor did Tiananmen supporters represent isolated groups, but instead illustrated the government's lack of control over the growing number of autonomous and

⁴¹ Zhang, xxxviii.

⁴² Anne F. Thurston, "Memory and Mourning: China Ten Years After Tiananmen," *SAIS Review* 19.2 Johns Hopkins University Press (1999): 78-79.

illegal student organizations. Conservatives lived in fear of "turmoil" that might lead to another Cultural Revolution.

Crowds numbering into the millions occupied the Square, blocking traffic, and disturbing everyday civil and social functions. But the numbers of protesters alone, though impressive, were not the main concern. More distressing was the popularity of the movement across occupations, regions, and social strata. Supporters came out en masse to encourage the students and join in the demonstrations. Reports at the time indicated that the students were also beginning to network with other provinces in an attempt to gain more support throughout China.

Conservatives believed hostile elements were manipulating and inciting the demonstrators to criticize the Party, its leaders, and its policies. Though most of the slogans were limited to calls for reform, some more radical slogans included criticism of top officials and the Communist party, calling for the resignation of key leaders. The demonstrators' growing popularity and boldness were enough on their own to challenge Party rule and threaten its leaders, but overseas pressure and international attention raised the stakes even further.

Other factors further undermined the government's authority. Internal dissent within the Party contributed to the public's view of a weak and divided government, while the international news media reported on the Party's inability to resolve the unrest. Foreign newspapers closely followed events and speculation over Chinese leadership and internal struggles. "The *Washington Post*

commented that the ongoing political and social unrest was greatly diminishing China's influence in international affairs."⁴³ The timing of Gorbachev's visit and the ADB meeting further embarrassed the Party and provided added incentives toward harsh repression of the demonstrators.⁴⁴

Initially, the pro-reform members of government attempted to calm the protesters through persuasion and dialogue. Monitors infiltrated the demonstrators and reported on the movement and student leaders while government leaders attempted to work through movement leaders to calm the situation. The state-owned media services censored student interviews, and the central government attempted to control the influx of students from other provinces. However, as time wore on without significant progress in their discussions with movement leaders, the conservatives consolidated their control and implemented more repressive measures. A mere military presence escalated to martial law, and finally the forcible clearing of the Square. The post-June 4 measures were equally repressive in nature. Numerous arrests and interrogations took place, requiring party members to reapply for membership and reaffirm their loyalty to the CCP.

Tiananmen greatly impacted Chinese foreign and domestic policy. Ironically, in 1992, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the demonstrators' demands for faster economic reform were realized with Deng's economic reform

⁴³ Zhang, 305.

⁴⁴ Liu, 517.

campaign. The diplomatic isolation that resulted from Tiananmen prompted China to seek a new accommodation with the West.⁴⁵

In sum, the government was slow and indecisive in its initial reaction. This can be contributed primarily to the internal turmoil between the conservative and reformist factions within the Party, which led to contradictory and conflicting actions. The lack of a clear course of action allowed the student movement to gain momentum in the face of the government's weakness whereby the situation ended up escalating beyond peacefully controllable means.

Just as the central government was ineffective in its initial response, it was similarly ineffective in its subsequent actions to quash the student movement. Although the demonstrations themselves were broken up and the students eventually returned to classes, it was only through bloodshed that this occurred. Despite the numerous detentions and arrests, the students and other dissidents did not remain silent for long. As the pro-reform movement regained traction, dissidents who were released from prison embarked on a new movement toward social reform in the form of the China Democracy Party.

⁴⁵ Miles, 14.

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III. CHINA DEMOCRACY PARTY CASE STUDY

A. INTRODUCTION

The China Democracy Party was a little known organization that attempted to establish itself as a political opposition party to the ruling Communist Party in the People's Republic of China in 1998. The group could barely sustain 200 active members and never even received official recognition as a social or political group. Yet, the governing authority of China's ruling Communist Party waged an impressive campaign against it, crushing the group in less than two years. The significance of this movement rested not in its popularity, but in the symbolic threat it posed. But what kind of threat could such a pitiful organization possibly pose to the multi-million member Chinese Communist Party, and how?

B. BACKGROUND

Under the term "multiparty cooperation," the CCP officially permits the existence of eight political parties beyond itself: The Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang, the China Democratic League, the China Democratic National Construction Association, the China Association for Promoting Democracy, the Chinese Peasants' and Workers' Democratic Party, the Party for Public Interests, the September 3 Society, and the Taiwan Democratic Self-Government League. However, all have sworn allegiance to the leadership of the CCP and play more of an advisory role than one of opposition.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ "Nipped in the Bud: The Suppression of the China Democracy Party," *Human Rights Watch*. September 2000, Vol. 12, No. 5; available from <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/china/>; accessed 3 May 2006.

Although most Party leaders, such as Li Peng asserted that China would never adopt a western-style multiparty system,⁴⁷ many individuals and groups have attempted to establish political parties independent of the CCP. None of these, however, has ever sought legal recognition or a national base. None has boasted more than a few dozen members. And none has survived.⁴⁸ In 1987, a Chinese People's Democratic Party (CPDP) was established in Fujian Province with approximately thirty-seven members. Seven of its organizers were imprisoned after the CPDP criticized the 1989 crackdown of Tiananmen. In 1994, sixteen dissidents belonging to the Liberal Democratic Party of China and the Free Labor Union of China were sentenced to heavy jail terms on charges of "organizing a counterrevolutionary group."⁴⁹

Chinese dissidents in the 1990s began to combine direct challenges to the regime with the adoption of populist causes, such as workers' rights, anticorruption, and environmental protection, in order to gain public sympathy. Direct challenges came in the form of individuals declaring their candidacy in local elections and attempting to register dissident groups. One such group was the China Democracy Party (CDP) which was founded in the summer of 1998.⁵⁰

C. EVENTS

The PRC leadership began to worry about political activism during the 1990s with the revival of dissident

⁴⁷ Xinhua News Agency, 1 December 1998 in "Nipped in the Bud."

⁴⁸ "Nipped in the Bud."

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Minxin Pei, "Rights and Resistance: The Changing Context of the Dissident Movement," *Chinese Society*, 2nd Ed. (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 31.

movements in a more relaxed political atmosphere. Between September 1997 and mid-November 1998, Chinese officials loosened official control over intellectual debate and expression of political views. It was during this time that many leading dissidents were released from prison due to internal political considerations and external pressures.⁵¹ The CDP first emerged as freed dissidents of Tiananmen Square and the Democracy Wall Movement of 1978-9 began to reorganize. Among them was Wang Youcai, a former student activist jailed for his involvement in the 1989 pro-democracy movement, who discussed the idea of forming an opposition party with fellow dissidents in late 1997. The idea first occurred to him during his two-year imprisonment, but he took no action until well after his release.

Chinese dissidents abroad also took an interest in the establishment of the CDP. One such dissident living in the United States, Wang Bingzhang, even attempted to reenter China in order to form an opposition party and distribute manuals for pro-democracy activists.⁵²

The CDP was formally organized and issued a charter that explicitly called for an end to the "one-party dictatorship" of the Communist Party. It also called for the promotion of human rights, justice, market reforms, and freedom of religion, and autonomy for ethnic minorities.⁵³ The CDP was to be based on the principles of "openness, peace, reason, and legality" with the intent to establish direct elections and a multi-party system. The initial

⁵¹ Pei, 28.

⁵² "Nipped in the Bud."

⁵³ Pei, 31.

strategy was to establish local preparatory committees, which would register under the CDP in order to gauge the response from local authorities and to pave the way for a national opposition party. No formal procedures existed to allow new political parties to apply for legal status. The CDP decided that applying through civil affairs was the closest approximation to legal application. Therefore, preparatory committees would register with their local civil affairs bureaus, and once enough committees had been established, a national preparatory committee would be formed.⁵⁴

Early meetings of the CDP were held in secret, but on the eve of President Clinton's visit to the PRC in June 1998, Wang Youcai formally announced the founding of the China Democracy Party believing that the Chinese government would exercise restraint while Clinton was present.⁵⁵ Members of the Hangzhou Preparatory Committee signed the "Open Declaration of the Establishment of the CDP Zhejiang Preparatory Committee" on June 25 and publicly circulated the document over the internet. They published a draft party constitution and requested the Zhejiang Province Civil Affairs Bureau to approve the party's application for formal legal status for the preparatory committee. This was the first time dissidents attempted to register a committee that supported the formation of an opposition party in the PRC.⁵⁶

The "Open Declaration" blatantly criticized the CCP for not allowing opposition groups.

⁵⁴ "Nipped in the Bud."

⁵⁵ Pei, 35.

⁵⁶ "Nipped in the Bud."

The CDP forcefully condemns the behavior of ruling groups which suppress political opposition groups by force; forcefully condemns the application of methods such as torture and reform-through-labor against those who carry differing political views; and forcefully demands the authorities release all persons detained for differing political views.⁵⁷

Lacking secure communications and sufficient funds, the CDP encouraged dissidents nationwide to take up the cause and establish their own local preparatory committees. Wu Yilong, one of the founding members and author of its "Guidelines for Activities," embarked on a sixteen-day nationwide tour to spread the word. Within four months, the CDP posted the names, phone numbers, and addresses of some 200 members on the internet⁵⁸ and had secured broad and sympathetic international press in the United States and other democratic countries.⁵⁹

Shortly after President Clinton concluded his visit, the government took action. It detained Wang and fourteen other dissidents on July 10. Wang was officially arrested on August 7 and charged with "inciting to overthrow state political power,"⁶⁰ but was released on August 31 under "residential surveillance."

Other preparatory committees attempted to register with the provincial Civil Affairs Bureau and were not immediately rejected. Initially, they were all informed

⁵⁷ (Open Declaration of the Establishment of the CDP Zhejiang Preparatory Committee), published on June 25, 1998, translated by Jan van der Made in "Nipped in the Bud."

⁵⁸ "Nipped in the Bud."

⁵⁹ "Strains on China," *The Washington Post*, 31 December 1999, A30.

⁶⁰ Li Wanfang, "Wang Youcai Under Residential Surveillance," *Beijing Spring*, October 1998, 45 in "Nipped in the Bud."

that the central government was considering the establishment of the CDP. However, a Beijing official from the Ministry of Civil Affairs later held an international press conference to announce that provincial bureaus of civil affairs had no authority to permit the establishment of political parties.⁶¹

On September 16, five well-known dissidents established the CDP Beijing Preparatory Committee and planned to register with the Beijing Civil Affairs Bureau on the 18th. However, on the evening of the 16th, two of the signatories were detained and interrogated for several hours while the home of a third was ransacked. Police later warned a fourth member to discontinue attempts to register the party. Registration attempts in other provinces met with similar responses.⁶²

Up until September 1998, the central government had used stalling and intimidation techniques to discourage CDP members from establishing an opposition party. However, the diehard members remained undeterred and, instead, continued to push for recognition, forcing the Party to deal more straightforwardly and harshly with these dissidents.

Toward the end of 1998, the CCP had lost all patience with the CDP and began to suppress it in earnest. On September 25, the "Regulations for Registration and Management of Social Groups" was signed into law. The new regulations placed further restrictions on the formation of social organizations, including political ones.

⁶¹ *Central News Agency* (Taiwan), 11 September 1998 in "Nipped in the Bud."

⁶² "Nipped in the Bud."

Unregistered group were labeled "illegal," former political prisoners were banned for life from forming non-profit groups or holding office, and organizations seeking registration had to first meet strict financial requirements.⁶³

By November 2, Wang Youcai was back in detention, but other CDP members continued to execute their plans. On November 6, Xu Wenli, a veteran of the 1979 Democracy Wall Movement, established the First CDP National Congress Preparatory Work Group and, on November 9, the CDP Beijing-Tianjin Regional Party Branch was established with Xu as chairman. The branch revised the party charter and called on dissidents in prison and in exile abroad to join in preparatory efforts to establish a more permanent core CDP leadership.⁶⁴

The move to establish party branches, in lieu of preparatory committees, without official recognition or permission from the central government indicated that the CDP viewed itself as a nationwide organization intent on forming a national structure.⁶⁵ The CCP responded with three waves of arrests, interrogations, and trials which provoked an immediate response from dissidents who demanded the release of prisoners and launched a hunger strike in

⁶³ "China: Freedom of Association Regulated Away," Human Rights in China, 1999, in Three Freedoms Project; available from <http://www.threefreedoms.org/finalreport2/1-cfoa.htm>; accessed 12/5/05.

⁶⁴ "Nipped in the Bud."

⁶⁵ Ibid.

protest. The U.S. State Department and several foreign ministers criticized the trials as contrary to the promotion of human rights.⁶⁶

Despite the first wave of arrests, a second echelon of leaders stepped forward. The new CDP leaders continued to hold meetings and issue open letters to the government. Additional party branches formed, but did not seek to register with the civil affairs bureaus. Gao Hongming, who had taken over leadership of the Beijing-Tianjin branch after Xu Wenli's detention, announced the membership of the national committee on February 6, 1999 and made plans to hold a national congress in March. But police intervened and the planned national congress never convened.⁶⁷

Police continued to harass CDP by breaking up meetings, routinely detaining and interrogating members, and ransacking their homes. In March the CCP government issued another call to maintain social safety and to guard against "foreign hostile forces" aimed at destroying the Communist Party.⁶⁸

Despite government warnings to refrain from engaging in any activity detrimental to state security and social stability, the Beijing branch of the CDP called for a peaceful commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre. It asked people to wear light-colored clothing and go to Tiananmen Square to "stand or sit still for a while" without posting posters, shouting

⁶⁶ Todd Crowell and David Hsieh, "China Gets Tough," *Asiaweek*, 08 January 1999; available from <http://www.pathfinder.com/asiaweek/99/0108/nat1.html#hard>; accessed 3 May 2006.

⁶⁷ "Nipped in the Bud."

⁶⁸ "Police Urged to Implement Laws Strictly," *China Daily*, 29 March 1999 in "Nipped in the Bud."

slogans, or interrupting construction work in the Square.⁶⁹ However, the unobtrusive protests still resulted in a second wave of detentions, indictments, and approximately 200 arrests.⁷⁰ The third and final wave of arrests and trials began on the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the People's Republic of China.

The first wave of arrests resulted in the detention of at least seven prominent CDP members who were tried and sentenced to lengthy prison terms. The second wave, sparked by the 1999 bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, the unexpected rise of Falun Gong, and the tenth anniversary of Tiananmen Square, led to the detention of 190 individuals, including some CDP members. The third wave of arrests between September 1999 and July 2000 claimed another ten top CDP members and effectively silenced the organization's activities.⁷¹

D. AFTERWARD

Despite the relatively small size of the China Democracy Party, the government crushed the organization through heavy harassment, and waves of detentions and arrests. Over the eighteen-month crackdown, at least 34 individuals were sentenced to prison terms of up to thirteen years, most on subversion charges of undermining

⁶⁹ "CDP Beijing Branch "Appeal to the Citizens of Beijing" *Xiao cankao*, 20 May 1999 in "Nipped in the Bud."

⁷⁰ James Conachy, "China Democracy Party Leaders Face Political Trials," *World Socialist Web Site*, 14 August 1999; available from <http://www.wsws.org/articles/1999/aug1999/cdp-a14.shtml>; accessed 3 May 2006. According to its website, the World Socialist Web Site is the internet center of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), which provides analysis of major world events, comments on political, cultural, historical and philosophical issues, and documents and studies from the heritage of the socialist movement. Its standpoint is one of opposition to the capitalist market system, and its aim is the establishment of world socialism.

⁷¹ "Nipped in the Bud."

state power, and four others fled into exile abroad. Individuals were often detained repeatedly and interrogated or held without trial for extended periods. Oftentimes wives were not informed of the charges against their husbands, how long they would be detained, or even where they were being held until trial was imminent. Those key members who remain in China still live under constant surveillance and have ceased to be openly active.⁷²

By January 2000, the CDP had been effectively crushed. Activities all but ceased, and remaining publications and protests were issued and organized from abroad.

E. ANALYSIS

The China Democracy Party posed a direct and blatant challenge to the Chinese Communist Party. It called for multiparty democracy in China and respect for human rights. Even though it recognized the rule of Communist Party leaders, it also openly criticized the same ruling body for denying opposition groups the right to exist. Authorities regarded the CDP as a group that aimed to undermine the basic principles and the monopoly of power of the CCP.⁷³ In several public addresses, President Jiang Zemin repeatedly emphasized that "stability should prevail over everything," reiterating the need to protect social stability and to "nip in the bud" any developments which might threaten that stability.⁷⁴ The CCP government clearly saw the demands of CDP activists as undermining the Communist Party's guiding principles.

⁷² "Nipped in the Bud."

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

The CDP was not unique in its desire to establish an opposition party, but it distinguished itself from previous political opposition groups in its organizational designs and structure. Previous groups had a relatively narrow geographic focus and little contact with foreign organizations, whereas the CDP promoted a nationwide network and possessed a sophisticated means of communication via the internet. Furthermore, none of the previous organizations attempted to secure formal legal status, unlike the CDP.⁷⁵

Although the CDP consisted of a very small number of people, probably never more than 200 activists, most had a history of openly challenging official policy. They were often veteran dissidents, many of them former political prisoners; 70 percent were active during the 1989 pro-democracy movement, while a smaller subset, including many of the leaders, were active during the 1979 Democracy Wall Movement. Members of the CDP were also skilled in modern communication techniques, especially via the internet, and strategic in their planning.⁷⁶

The size of the CDP may have been miniscule but its presence was far-reaching, with branches and preparatory committees represented in all but three of China's twenty-seven provinces. Communist party leaders also feared overseas support from exiled dissidents living abroad, as evidenced by calls to guard against hostile foreign forces.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ "Nipped in the Bud."

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

After a short grace period and seeming tolerance, Chinese authorities responded to the CDP swiftly and decisively. Communist Party leaders lost patience with the bold opposition group and decimated its ranks through intimidation and incarceration. Key members were harassed, detained, interrogated, and imprisoned. A new wave of arrests followed every "subversive action" by, or appearance of, new CDP leaders until their ranks were exhausted. The cycle of trials and sentencing decimated the party within eighteen months.

In sum, just as with the Tiananmen demonstrations, the CCP was again slow to react to this organization. Between June 1998, when the organization formally announced its founding, and November, when the first wave of arrests and trials began, the CCP did little to decisively denounce the CDP. Although intimidation techniques were used to discourage members, the central government took no specific measures to deny the establishment of preparatory committees until September. The movement was small and its entire membership roster was posted online. What is noteworthy is that it still took eighteen months and three waves of arrests to finally send such a small organization underground. As founding members were arrested, new leaders took their place. Even today, CDP supporters are still active overseas. While the CCP was able to suppress the organization, it was not able to completely suppress its members.

IV. FALUN GONG CASE STUDY

A. INTRODUCTION

The Falung Gong, or Falun Dafa, movement inspired the largest and most protracted public demonstrations in China since the democracy movement in 1989. Initially barely even a nuisance to government officials, practitioners of the "religious" sect quickly became a priority security issue after a peaceful sit-in in Beijing in April 1999. Fearing social unrest and political challenge, the Chinese government outlawed Falun Gong three months later and began the most brutal crackdown since Tiananmen, affecting not only Falun Gong but other similar organizations. Despite the government's efforts, Falun Gong followers continued staging small scale demonstrations for over two years, even interrupting government television broadcasts in 2002 and 2003.⁷⁸ What was the appeal of this religious sect, and how did an insignificant spiritual movement become such a serious threat to the CCP and political stability?

B. BACKGROUND

After the Communist government came to power in 1949, it created national religious organizations to confine and control the five recognized faiths: Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Christianity, and Catholicism. Residual local cults were suppressed as superstitious. Thanks to the economic reforms of the 1980s, however, government control was weakened in many areas, including religion. As a result, numerous churches, mosques, and monasteries reopened. However, the government still insisted religious activities be practiced only within the confines of the approved

⁷⁸ Thomas Lum, "China and 'Falun Gong,'" *CRS Report for Congress*, 24 January 2004, 1.

organizations established in the 1950s. Other restrictions stipulated that believers devote their primary allegiance to Chinese religious leaders instead of foreign religious leaders, and that religious beliefs strictly adhere to socialist ideals. This forbade any group from challenging the official creed of the state.⁷⁹

Falun Gong was derived from the practices and beliefs of *qigong*. *Qi* describes vital energies or life forces. *Qigong* is the set of movements designed to stimulate the flow of *qi* throughout the body.⁸⁰ *Qigong* quickly regained popularity and sects flourished in the 1980s and 1990s. They successfully combined post-socialist themes with pre-revolutionary religious traditions. They also provided educational and basic health care services to large numbers of Chinese citizens who were otherwise deprived of these due to the economic hardships of the time.⁸¹

Li Hongzhi, a former Grain Bureau clerk, developed Falun Gong in the late 1980s. In 1992, he explained his ideas in his book titled *Zhuan Fah*n, and from 1993 to 1996 Falun Gong was incorporated into an official organization, the China *Qi Gong* Science Research Society.⁸² The Society later decided that Falun Gong was a Buddhist sect and deregistered it in February 1997.⁸³

⁷⁹ "China: Beijing Bans Religious Cults," *OxResearch*. Oxford: Oxford Analytica, 15 December 1999, 1; available from <http://libproxy.nps.navy.mil/login?url=http://proquest.umi.com/libproxy.nps.navy.mil/pqdweb?did=551282321&sid=1&Fmt=3&clientId=11969&RQT=309&VName=PQD>; accessed 13 April 2006.

⁸⁰ Lum, 1.

⁸¹ Patricia M. Thornton, "The New Cybersects: Resistance and Repression in the Reform Era," in *Chinese Society*, 258.

⁸² Lum, 2-3.

⁸³ Tony Saich, *Governance and Politics of China, Second Edition*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2004), 204.

Falun Gong combined exercise, meditation, and moral guidance. It preached the three main virtues of truthfulness, compassion, and forbearance and warned against materialism and moral degradation. Followers believed that the practice of Falun Gong could lead to physical well-being, emotional tranquility, moral virtue, and cosmic understanding.⁸⁴

Practitioners claim to have no political agenda other than the protection of constitutional rights. They also emphasize that Falun Gong is not a religion in that it does not worship any deity, consist of a formal hierarchy, church, or temple.⁸⁵

At the height of its popularity, Falun Gong claimed seventy million members in mainland China.⁸⁶ Members of Falun Gong did not fit neatly into any specific demographic. Every class and occupation of citizen was represented, from students and intellectuals, to farmers and industrial workers, and even government officials and party leaders. Many retired military cadre and women believed the exercise regimen would improve their health.⁸⁷ Large numbers of adherents could also be found among the elderly and laid-off workers.

C. EVENTS

Falun Gong grew in popularity during the mid 1990's, boasting several thousand followers in the United States and diverse millions in China, including many Chinese

⁸⁴ Lum, 1.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 2.

⁸⁶ Craig S. Smith, "Asylum Plea by Chinese Sect's Leader Perplexes the US," *The New York Times*, 31 July 2000, 3.

⁸⁷ Saich, 204.

Communist Party members. The healing practices of the movement became increasingly attractive as economic reforms reduced medical benefits.⁸⁸

As Falun Gong grew in strength and power during the reform era, it attracted limited attention from the central leadership. Following the June 1989 crackdown in Tiananmen, the PRC government imposed stringent new regulations on all social organizations. Government surveillance increased and local governments established administrative offices to ensure compliance with the new policies.⁸⁹

In December 1990, the celebrated *qigong* master Zhang Xiangyu was arrested and charged with crimes ranging from the practice of *qigong* therapy without proper authority to organizing large public gatherings without prior approval of the Beijing police. Her arrest and the subsequent closure of her Nature *Qigong* schools somewhat dampened, but by no means extinguished, the popularity of the practice.⁹⁰

Instead Falun Gong practitioners grew increasingly defiant in the face of government surveillance and suspicion. Founder Li Hongzhi left China in 1996 and began promoting his *qigong* practices overseas. Soon thereafter, the Chinese Society of *Qigong* Science and a *Guangming Daily* article accused Li's Research Society of Falun Dafa of advocating superstition. The Chinese Society of *Qigong* Science suspended his organization's registration, and the Press and Publications Administration and several local governments banned his books. Practitioners responded by

⁸⁸ Lum, 2.

⁸⁹ Thornton, 258.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 258.

staging mass protests and sit-in demonstrations against media sources that criticized the group and its leader.⁹¹

Despite growing numbers and popularity, the movement still remained largely unnoticed by the PRC government until April 1999. Then, a popular science magazine published another article labeling Falun Gong as "sham qigong." Subsequent protests outside the magazine offices and the Tianjin municipal government led to a number of arrests.⁹²

Then most ominously for the government, on April 25, 1999, over ten thousand Falun Gong activists gathered before Zhongnanhai to stage a peaceful sit-in to protest the government's criticisms of the organization and growing restrictions on their activities. Located near the center of Beijing, Zhongnanhai is the gated residential compound for the top Party leaders, representing the national headquarters of the Party and state. Located just west of the Forbidden City, access to the complex was closed to the public following the 1989 Tiananmen protest. Trespassers, not to mention demonstrators, were strictly prohibited. The ability of the Falun Gong practitioners to successfully organize and sustain a thirteen-hour protest⁹³ without the Party's prior knowledge greatly disturbed top leaders.⁹⁴

This gathering, the largest since the Tiananmen demonstration of June 4, caught Party officials completely by surprise. The sit-in marked the group's first public protest directed at central authorities. The demonstrators

⁹¹ Thornton, 259.

⁹² Ibid., 259.

⁹³ Ibid., 260.

⁹⁴ James Tong, "Anatomy of Regime Suppression in China," *Asian Survey*, Vol 42, No 6 (Nov 2002): 819.

demanded official recognition and constitutional rights to free speech, press, and assembly. Some evidence suggests that Party leaders disagreed as to whether or not to ban Falun Gong.⁹⁵ However, President Jiang Zemin experienced no such conflict. He was appalled by the disrespect shown to Party authority. He was equally shocked at the mobilization capacity and discipline of the followers. Jiang denounced the demonstration as the "boldest public challenge to regime authority since the founding of the People's Republic" and ordered a crackdown.⁹⁶

Just as they did with the Tiananmen Square demonstrators and the CDP, some Party officials suspected covert overseas involvement with Falun Gong. The organization did indeed possess significant overseas ties, with both its leader and organizational headquarters located abroad. Jiang particularly worried about American involvement, even going so far as to suspect the April 26 demonstration of being part of a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) scheme.⁹⁷ He was also upset with the United States for granting Li Hongzhi a visa. Additionally, Falun Gong boasted significant international support, with several thousand followers in the United States alone.

Initial government reactions to Falun Gong included circulars prohibiting Party members from practicing Falun Gong. Security forces also collected names of instructors,

⁹⁵ Lum, 3.

⁹⁶ Tong, 799.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 804-805.

infiltrated classes, and closed book stalls selling Falun Gong literature.⁹⁸ But as tensions rose and demonstrations continued, the government tightened its control even more.

Party leaders timed the more severe suppression efforts so as not to coincide with major events that could aggravate the situation or allow activists to take advantage of international press coverage, such as the anniversaries of the Tiananmen Massacre, Hong Kong's reversion to Chinese rule, and the founding of the PRC.⁹⁹

After a three-month delay, Party leaders began an earnest crackdown. On July 21, 1999, the PRC government outlawed Falun Gong. Security officers closed teaching stations and practice sites and banned all publications concerning the movement. Party and government officials were required to sever all ties to the Falun Gong movement. Additionally, Party cadre suspected of membership were required to confess, renounce their beliefs, and help undermine the sect. Selected cadre were required to attend mandatory re-education in Party schools. A public campaign was mounted to discredit the sect and its leader, while officials promoted alternatives to qigong meditation, such as other health-enhancing exercises.¹⁰⁰ And, although safely overseas, a warrant was issued for Li Hongzhi's arrest.

By July 9, only a week after the sect was outlawed and Li's arrest warrant was issued, the government effectively

⁹⁸ Lum, 3.

⁹⁹ Tong, 800.

¹⁰⁰ "China: Sect Subjugation," *Oxford Analytica*: 3 August 1999, 1; available from <http://libproxy.nps.navy.mil/login?url=http://proquest.umi.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/pqdweb?did=568214941&sid=1&Fmt=3&clientId=11969&RQT=309&VName=PQD>; accessed 15 April 2006.

shut down 28,000 practice sites and 80 websites,¹⁰¹ confiscated 1.55 million publications, and detained over 5,000 sect members.¹⁰² Between 150 and 450 sect leaders were sentenced to prison terms of 18-20 years on a variety of charges, including "leaking state secrets to foreigners, organizing superstitious sects, disrupting public order, obstructing justice, engaging in unlawful assembly and publication, tax evasion, and manslaughter."¹⁰³

Within three months, the government detained and questioned over 30,000 participants, releasing them only after they denounced their membership through apostasy or identified other practitioners.¹⁰⁴ The Communist Party organized and executed a program to arrest the sect's top leaders, convert and rehabilitate over 300,000 Party members who renounced Falun Gong, and reeducate another two million practitioners.¹⁰⁵ And in October 1999, the Standing Committee labeled Falun Gong an "evil cult"¹⁰⁶ and issued an anti-cult law which legalized the repression of Falun Gong and similar organizations.¹⁰⁷

As Falun Gong followers continued traveling to Beijing to stage protests from July 1999 to October 2000, the central government began punishing provincial governments

¹⁰¹ Tong, 795.

¹⁰² "China: Sect Subjugation."

¹⁰³ Lum, 4.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 3.

¹⁰⁵ Tong, 796.

¹⁰⁶ Julia Ching, "The Falun Gong: Religious and Political Implications," *American Asian Review*, Winter 2001. Vol. 19, Issue 4; available from <http://libproxy.nps.navy.mil/login?url=http://proquest.umi.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/pqdweb?did=110296142&sid=1&Fmt=3&clientId=11969&RQT=309&VName=PQD>; accessed 1 June 2006.

¹⁰⁷ Saich, 204.

for allowing practitioners to journey to the capital. The provincial governments, in turn, delegated responsibility to local authorities who often employed brutal methods of suppression.¹⁰⁸

Following the harsh crackdown in the PRC, and with its leader residing safely abroad, Falun Gong organizational activities shifted to the internet, where practitioners could find elaborate websites, electronic bulletin boards, and e-mail distribution lists. Overseas activists pursued high-profile activities, such as lobbying foreign governments and filing lawsuits. Meanwhile, mainland practitioners established an underground network of cell-like groups and shifted to web-based communication strategies.¹⁰⁹

As China entered the cyberworld, the Chinese government took several steps to control and monitor the internet, but Falun Gong's leap into cyberspace forced Chinese authorities to increase internet surveillance. They launched a number of anti-Falun Gong websites and shut down an ever-growing list of banned sites. Security agents routinely installed updated monitoring devices at the offices of internet service providers to track e-mail accounts and block websites.¹¹⁰

D. AFTERWARDS

The PRC government has repeatedly labeled Falun Gong "the most serious threat to stability in 50 years of [Chinese] communist history." The government feared that "religious fever" and economic unrest could spark

¹⁰⁸ Lum, 5.

¹⁰⁹ Thornton, 261.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 261.

widespread political protests.¹¹¹ But thus far the movement has shown little potential for rallying nationwide social support.

The PRC government's harsh crackdown on Falun Gong followers garnered some support for the movement. However on January 23, 2001, the immolations of six individuals believed to be Falun Gong followers gave credence to government descriptions of a dangerous, superstitious cult and alienated many PRC citizens. The PRC government took over two years to outwardly suppress Falun Gong, but followers are believed to still practice in secret.¹¹² "The largest memberships and severest human rights abuses have been reported in China's northeastern provinces, which are also experiencing high levels of unemployment."¹¹³

The Falun Gong movement continues to not only affect the Chinese government, but also to attract international attention, particularly because of human rights abuses and religious freedom violations.

The United States House of Representatives passed House Congressional Resolution 188 on July 24, 2002, which called upon the PRC government to cease persecuting Falun Gong followers, and introduced House Congressional Resolution 304 on October 16, 2003, which called upon the PRC government to cease human rights violations against Falun Gong followers in China and to stop harassing followers in the United States. For five years (1999-

¹¹¹ Lum, 6.

¹¹² Ibid., 4.

¹¹³ Ibid., 4.

2003), the U.S. State Department has categorized China as "a country of particular concern" because of religious freedom violations and persecution of Falun Gong.¹¹⁴

E. ANALYSIS

The unexpected actions of Falun Gong practitioners in April 1999 surprised officials and awakened them to the potential of faith-based movements for inspiring loyalty. The concern of senior leaders about being caught off guard led to the severe crackdown of the organization and vigorous efforts to discredit it as a superstitious cult.¹¹⁵ This resulted in thousands of arrests and sparked investigations into similar organizations.

Religion can command a fanatic and loyal following in addition to being something individuals can turn to for guidance and meaning. During a time of economic crisis, millions turned to Falun Gong for moral guidance and health benefits. But the movement raised concerns over "cultural pollution," thanks to which superstitious activities and beliefs could undermine officially approved values.¹¹⁶ Falun Gong challenged the Party's right to moral authority over its people.¹¹⁷

In addition to its ability to promote an independent belief system that represented a direct challenge to the Party's ideological authority, the government was also concerned over Falun Gong's size and organizational capacity.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Lum, 6.

¹¹⁵ Saich, 11.

¹¹⁶ Elizabeth J. Perry and Mark Selden, eds., *Chinese Society, 2nd Ed* (New York: Routledge, 2000) p. 6.

¹¹⁷ Saich, 184.

¹¹⁸ "China: Sect Subjugation."

At the height of its popularity, Falun Gong had a following of several millions. Although the majority of practitioners were middle-aged citizens and women with little interest in politics or dislike for the government, it was also popular among retired cadre and military members and government officials. Its influence flourished well outside formal control and offered its followers spiritual guidance far more appealing than anything the government could offer.¹¹⁹ Falun Gong attracted the attention and anxiety of Party leaders when they realized the organization was not limited to an isolated group of individuals, but one whose constituency spanned localities and socio-economic boundaries.¹²⁰

Falun Gong further demonstrated how easy it was for an organization outside the state to mobilize the masses without the government even being aware. The ability to organize a major demonstration without prior knowledge of the Communist Party or the Public Security Bureau alarmed officials. And the conduct of the demonstrators during and after the sit-in demonstrated strong organizational capacity and discipline. Because the sect appealed to many former cadre, leaders worried about the level of infiltration by Falun Gong into the Communist Party, to include the military and civil service. Hostility toward the sect grew as Party leaders were forced to acknowledge the number of cadre and senior officials who belonged to it.¹²¹ In addition to its large domestic following, Falun Gong also enjoyed significant overseas support.

¹¹⁹ "China: Beijing Bans Religious Cults."

¹²⁰ Saich, 11.

¹²¹ "China: Sect Subjugation."

In sum, the fervor with which the government cracked down on Falun Gong underlined how threatened Party leaders felt. The organization was outlawed and labeled a superstitious cult. Publications were banned, confiscated, and destroyed while practice sites were shut down. Officials waged an information operation campaign by attempting to discredit the organization and its leader and by increasing surveillance and censorship of the internet. But the most severe measures included the mass arrests and persecution of suspected individuals, forced confessions and reeducation, detention of tens of thousands, imprisonment of hundreds, and the expulsion of many more from jobs.

Again, the CCP demonstrated a lapse in early threat recognition. Although Falun Gong had millions of followers, the central government did not sense a potential threat until ten thousand followers surprised authorities with a well-organized sit-in demonstration. The subsequent three-month delay in the crackdown can be attributed to concerns about timing, given various inauspicious anniversaries or the large number of cadre and Party members who belonged to the sect; however, the methods of crackdown were similar to those employed by the government in the previous two cases, with mass detentions and forced confessions. But despite the Party's greatest efforts Falun Gong is still quite active, with members practicing in secret, disrupting television broadcasts, and even engaging in immolations. It seems no exaggeration to say that the crackdown of Falun Gong did little more than move the playing field to the realm of virtual reality and the internet.

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V. CONCLUSION

A. COMPARISON

When comparing the three case studies, one finds that the rise of each movement was facilitated by the political liberalization and economic developments of the post-Mao reform era. However, the actual origins of each movement differ somewhat. The Tiananmen students were greatly influenced by the democracy movement, and their primary concerns were continued and accelerated economic and political reform. The China Democracy Party had similar goals, as many of its key members were former student activists and intellectuals; however, its primary goal was to establish an opposition party under the premise of multi-party cooperation. Lastly, the Falun Gong emerged as a spiritual movement, whose primary complaint was about increasing restrictions of its activities.

None of these groups presented themselves as a very violent opposition or intent on overthrowing the government. In fact, all the organizations attempted to achieve their goals through peaceful and legal means in conjunction with the ruling Communist Party. The students in Tiananmen staged peaceful sit-ins and hunger strikes and sought dialogue with Party leaders. The CDP patiently submitted request after request for formal recognition. Falun Gong practitioners were perhaps the most die hard with a handful engaging in self-immolations, but those occurred only after a harsh crackdown. Indeed, it was a peaceful sit-in that sparked the Party's interest in Falun Gong. None of these groups, then, posed a militant threat to the government.

However, in terms of sheer numbers, both the Tiananmen students and Falun Gong practitioners could rally large groups, involving millions and attracting the support of millions more. The CDP's size was almost negligible compared to these other organizations. With only some 200 members, the CDP could hardly be considered a significant opposition force, yet the central government reacted just as strongly to it as against the other two groups.

B. THE THREAT

In a sentence, the Party regarded each movement as a serious threat to its existence and authority. These organizations could rally popular support and they also demonstrated impressive organization capabilities. All of them rallied inter-societal support and engaged in networking, thus suggesting that dissident groups were not isolated, but interconnected. Workers, students, and farmers from multiple provinces were proving capable of being organized and intertwined. The central government also feared possible foreign support as each group possessed overseas ties.

Internal, domestic crises invariably pose a threat to regime legitimacy. The conflicts are often over principle and have a symbolic aspect, making compromise more difficult. Recognition of a new interest group may serve as a sort of contagion, forcing a restructuring of the political system.¹²²

The government also feared independent organizations. The Party believed that as soon as it gave in to any demand

¹²² Liu, 506.

from an organization it did not control, the Party's monopoly over power would be destroyed.¹²³

Chinese leaders are perfectly aware of the dangers inherent in cross-class, cross-nationality, and cross-regional associations that challenge their authority. Because of such fears that protests could give rise to inter-class, inter-regional, or even international connections, the government often tries to deal with attempts to establish such bonds swiftly and severely, often through repressive measures.¹²⁴

The leadership and organizational capacity of dissident groups in these three cases particularly concerned Party leaders. Many key members of the CDP were former political activists with strong agendas, and the Falun Gong consisted of numerous retired military and cadre with exceptional organizational skills. The Tiananmen Square protests, though not centrally organized, did spring forth from a number of autonomous student organizations outside formal control, and the unexpected April 1999 Falun Gong sit-in demonstrated the sect's ability to mobilize large numbers without alerting any authorities.

Most importantly, each group posed a threat to the Communist Party's leadership simply by challenging the Party's overarching authority over economic, political, and spiritual matters. The China Democracy Party challenged the CCP's right to political monopoly while Falun Gong challenged CCP's right to moral authority. The CCP

¹²³ Zhang, xl.

¹²⁴ Perry, 18.

emphasized stability above all, so was bound to view any dissident activity as challenging the social stability of the country.

C. SOCIAL CONTROL METHODS

The methods of social control the government applied varied slightly for each movement but, for the most part, followed the same general pattern. Tiananmen began with some dialogue in an effort to diffuse the situation, but even this preliminary dialogue can be described as insincere. Zhao may have wanted to engage the students in meaningful dialogue, but the representatives sent by the Party either did not offer concessions or were low-level cadre who could not offer concessions. When conservative elements gained control, even this evaporated into physical intimidation. Surveillance techniques were used to monitor student activities and identify ring leaders. Even from the outset of the demonstrations, the government infiltrated the students and generated almost hourly situation reports. Party members also received daily reports from the outlying provinces. When it became apparent that the demonstrators would not disperse, force was used. Subsequent to the demonstration, suspects were detained en masse, interrogated, and forced to sign confessions or denounce any participation in the demonstration or support for the demonstrators.

The CDP was seemingly tolerated at first, but as soon as it proved its resolve, key members were firmly advised to give up their fight. Again, individuals were carefully monitored and the central government resorted to physical

intimidation to slowly decimate their ranks. CDP members were detained, interrogated, searched, and imprisoned under charges of subversion.

Falun Gong members were also subject to similar physical intimidation techniques. Initially Party members were told to sever ties with the movement, but once the Party outlawed Falun Gong, practice facilities and book stalls were closed, publications were confiscated, and web sites shut down. A purge of practitioners began as thousands were detained and questioned. Leaders were imprisoned, and cadre were forced to renounce the practice and undergo reeducation training. An arrest warrant was issued for Li Hongzhi, Falun Gong's leader, while the government embarked on an information campaign to discredit Li and the sect.

All these events elicited a similar response from the central government. Initially it gave the impression of dialogue and tolerance, but as soon as the organizations grew beyond the Party's control, more forceful and physical controls were implemented, specifically detentions, interrogations, and imprisonment. Detained individuals were either forced to renounce their involvement in dissident activity or they were made to confess and assist in ferreting out other dissidents. Those who were unable to escape overseas were often imprisoned or kept under constant surveillance. The immediate crackdown was often followed by purges and witch-hunts until the government was satisfied that the organization had been crushed. Through each of these events, the government also tried to maintain strict control over media sources: newspaper, television, and internet. The government shut down opposing sites and

promoted its own propaganda campaigns to discredit the dissenters. Even today the government still relies on heavy censure and filters, requiring even foreign companies to adhere to Party standards before they are granted a contract to operate in the country.

However, because Tiananmen was first, we can say that it did slightly influence the government's responses to later challenges, such as those presented by the China Democracy Party and the Falun Gong religious movement. The government learned from Tiananmen to have all its elements in place to crush the opposition before it actually acted on any one of them. What we can conclude is that the ruling Chinese Communist Party is fearful that any organized opposition could become a political focus for the widespread hostility and alienation of working people. It has crushed all oppositional political, industrial or peasant movements as they have emerged.¹²⁵ While the Party, post-Tiananmen, still feared that conceding to the demands of groups it did not control would lead to the destruction of its political system,¹²⁶ the Party learned to time its actions better so as to avoid historically significant anniversaries that might help to catalyze support for the opposition and it also learned to avoid occasions covered by foreign press.

In terms of effectiveness, one might argue that the CCP has repeatedly demonstrated an inability to act quickly and decisively at the onset. Such hesitation may be attributed to internal conflict in the Party regarding the threat, or a belief that the movement in question will give

¹²⁵ Conachy.

¹²⁶ Zhang, xl.

up on its own. Even taking into account the lessons of timing, the central government was still slow to oppose the China Democracy Party and Falun Gong. The Party did not even attempt to denounce either movement until each had already gained considerable momentum and support.

Similarly, the effectiveness of the crackdowns can likewise be questioned. Although these movements were physically crushed and their memberships decimated through incarcerations or renouncements, the CCP actually proved quite incapable of suppressing them completely. Tiananmen Square dissidents found new voice in the CDP. And while CDP members in China are either in prison or under constant surveillance, overseas and exiled supporters remain active. Falun Gong also remains very active, having taken its battle to the internet. Practitioners continue to host websites, disrupt broadcasts, and stage demonstrations.

D. SUMMARY

In summary, the Chinese Communist Party is threatened - and recognizes that it is threatened - by any autonomous group whose influence and support bridges social boundaries, whether these be class, occupation, or region, and challenges the Party's authority of social, political, or moral rule. This has been the case since the Party's founding. What is more interesting is that the methods of social control have not evolved much in the last several decades. The central government is slow to react to potential threats, and often indecisive in its initial response. The government has learned to be more aware of timing, foreign press, and bloodshed, but the suppression techniques remain the same. Surveillance and intimidation give way to mass interrogations, arrests, and forced

confessions. However, the effectiveness of these methods is where the CCP will increasingly be tested, since these are only superficial, as dissidents increasingly find other means around the "strong arm" of the government, whether through the internet or asylum or both in combination with increasingly active overseas Chinese communities.

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